DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 412 053 RC 021 174

AUTHOR	Roberts, Nina S.; Winiarczyk, Ellen J.
TITLE	Women in Experiential Education Speak Out: An Anthology of Personal Stories across Cultures.
PUB DATE	1996-00-00
NOTE	26p.; In: Women's Voices in Experiential Education; see RC 021 160.
PUB TYPE	Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Biographies; *Employed Women; *Experiential Learning; Females; Minority Group Influences; *Minority Group Teachers; Outdoor Education; *Personal Narratives; *Racial Bias; *Sex Bias; Stereotypes; Teacher Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS	*Outdoor Leadership; Single Sex Programs

ABSTRACT

The collection of stories gives voice to the variety of women's experiences rising out of ethnicity, race, class, and generational differences as well as to the simple individual histories of women. Five women with a wide range of differences, including African American, Native American, and Japanese women, share their experiences in, and perspectives on, the field of experiential education. From their stories emerge some commonalities. They reveal an excitement and dedication to the field of experiential education because it is education that works--that transforms and does not devalue, provides for personal growth, and influences people in positive ways. The lack of people of color, especially women of color, in experiential education is a major issue. Minorities in the field are beset with tokenism, where a few people of color are thought to represent an entire culture. People of color are often singled out to work with minority groups, which can be a valid approach depending on the actual motivation. They often are not taken seriously, and there is much stereotyping. Several of the women mention their role models' or mentors' influence on them and note the importance of their families' support. The field of experiential education is empowering to practitioners as well as students. The various people of color within the field, as well as White practitioners, need to develop cross-cultural ties, since they often don't know whether to embrace or be leery of one another. Women must recognize that mutual support can make a big difference. (TD)

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Women in Experiential Education Speak Out: An Anthology of Personal Stories across Cultures

Nina S. Roberts and Ellen J. Winiarczyk

ED 412 053

In our experience, many of the stories told in circles of experiential educators in past decades lack the voice and flavor of a women's perspective. We know the lives and stories of many of the male founding adventurers in experiential education, but rarely the women. One of our goals as we took on this challenge of recording women's stories, was to record a variety of experiences by a rainbow of women with differences in education, age, sexual orientation, marital status, ethnic background, and experience. A number of the women included here have been involved in the field of experiential education for many years, while others' involvement is relatively recent.

Although we had initial difficulty structuring this collection of stories, it has been the collaborative and cooperative process, with each other and the women interviewed, that has made this a rich experience for each of us. Long discussions at the 1994 International Association for Experiential Education Conference and many phone calls have revolved around how to best unite our ideas, the individual stories, the styles, and the diversity that underlies the collective concerns and successes of women. The choices we had to make were difficult. In order to create an anthology that would give voice to the variety of experiences rising out of ethnicity, race, class, and generational differences as well as out of the simple, irreducible fact of individual histories, we were not able to include all the women we had on our list.

Our collaboration and editing process has been an experience in itself. Part of the difficulty of how best to structure this collection stemmed from the question regarding the need for voices of women of color to be heard and not hidden. While these are women's stories that have surely been told before, they have not been heard in a collection, nor have they been recognized in their magnificent similarity and difference.

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We've included personal statements that reflect each of our views about ourselves, this process, and women in experiential education.

Thoughts from Nina

It is critical to recognize that to live, to observe, to write as a woman of color is to live, observe, and write from a position of difference. Although I have a multiracial background, for the sake of simplicity, my identity is from a bi-racial standpoint of primary ancestry (European American father/East Indian mother). Growing up, I was socialized in two distinctly different cultures, yet I still belong to a minority group. As a dark-skinned woman with unique features, people sometimes have difficulty figuring out exactly what my background is. "Are you Black? Portuguese? Latina?" These are questions I am frequently asked.

My experiences and my expressions are different from many of my sisters of color; nevertheless, we share several common threads. That is, we face a certain degree of discrimination and stereotyping, and live in a political framework where white people maintain positions of decision-making power. Consequently, we seek support from our sisters of color to build alliances and strengthen our cultural communities.

As Ellen and I were formulating a method for these interviews, I strongly felt and expressed that, as a woman of color, I should talk with the women of color selected to be included in this chapter. Perhaps some would challenge this with resistance. Through my own research efforts and conversations with numerous professionals, I've learned that it is a common viewpoint that the special insight of minority group scholars (insiders) renders them best qualified to obtain information from minority communities. I am not suggesting that white professionals should not study racial minorities, but I do think that minority scholars have both empirical and methodological advantages. The most important one is that the "lenses" through which they see social reality may allow minority scholars to ask questions and gather information that others could not.

In talking with my sisters of color, there is an exchange of trust and common interest that Ellen could not conceptualize as an "outsider." In experiential education, both gender and race affiliations have made it necessary for women of color to develop strong relationships across cultural lines as a matter of coalition building. The connections we make in this field are often easier, however, due to the genuine and inclusive nature of the professionals involved.

My vision is that as more women of color are trained in experiential education, a field that is still predominantly and historically European American and male, there will be an environment that fosters working together across ideological lines such as class, appearance, skin color, age, sexuality, and community affiliations—issues that have tended to divide all people of color. Culture is, after all, the stories we tell about ourselves, not the stories others tell about us.

Thoughts from Ellen

While the stories contained in this chapter are wonderful and unique, I believe our collaborative process in creating this article has also been each of these things. In our early discussions at the 1994 conference in Austin, I knew intellectually that it was important for Nina to interview the women of color. However, my stubborn and sometimes "blindly equitable" mindset made it difficult to detach myself from wanting to share the women-of-color interviews with Nina, thus splitting the interviews up in some "other" manner. I always thought I saw social reality for "everyone" quite well (how arrogant!). While I am aware of the individuality my Polish/Irish heritage and lesbian identity bring to my life experience, I know this mindset was shaped by the ease in which my white skin has allowed me to access the privileges of the dominant American culture.

My story as a woman in experiential education has been rather simple, though not entirely. I could always successfully compete, talk, run, climb, play as hard as my fellow brothers and sisters in my suburban Catholic neighborhood and schools. Being in the outdoors and teaching were second nature to me. I worked in the field of education for a while, with the illusion that all women and men regarded each other as equally competent, skilled, and knowledgeable. However, reality struck when I, and other women, were labeled as strident and outspoken by colleagues who became threatened by our confidence and competence. This led me to wonder why there were so few women, and people of color, in the arena of adventure-based and experiential education.

It has been through stories, adventures, and processes with mainly my women friends, and especially my partner, that I have come to recognize my place and identity, as well as those of others. By learning about my identity and trusting my own processes, over the years, I have grown as an educator. As women experiential educators, we must remain open to trusting the process of growth and change, but we must also make our voices heard.

The diversity of experience represented in the stories that follow, I hope, will resonate with each passing reader. Their differences and similarities, like raindrops, nurture each organism on which they fall.

Karen McKinney

Karen McKinney is an African American woman from Minneapolis, Minnesota. An ordained Baptist minister, she graduated from Mankato State University in Minnesota with a Master's Degree in Experiential Education. This interview took place during the last quarter of her program. She has since relocated to South Carolina where she is an instructor with the National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) which is part of the AmeriCorps program.

When Karen was nineteen years old, she worked at an inner-city Boys and Girls club. "We did a lot of traditional educational things and a lot of experiential things but didn't have the language, we didn't call it that," she explains. "We took kids on Outward Bound-type trips such as eight-day expeditions in the Boundary Waters. We took kids on mission trips and did lots of service learning. Again, I didn't call it service learning because I didn't have that language." Karen left the Boys and Girls club after ten years and went to South America with the intention of improving her Spanish skills. She then traveled to Honduras and worked in a refugee camp on the border of El Salvador.

Upon return, she worked again at the Boys and Girls club before going to The Fuller Theological Seminary in California. Before she left for the seminary, however, she started a program called the Servant Leadership Project which took youth overseas on a mission trip to Haiti. Co-sponsored by her church, church leaders convinced her not to go because of potential dangers. The trip was canceled five days before their departure. Because these inner-city kids had spent their entire summer raising money for this trip and could not go, Karen scrambled to find an alternative.

"I got information from the National Youth Leadership Project (NYLP) and did their ten-day leadership conference," she reports. "That was my first encounter with experiential education in that language. I took these kids on an NYLP program and they later called me up as a consultant and asked me to work at a couple of smaller conferences." The next few summers, Karen was invited back as a staff member and eventually asked to direct the program. Karen emphatically states, "I took the position part-time as the director of the National Youth Leadership Project. I was hiring people who were experiential educators; we did rock climbing, canoeing, biking, service learning, and high and low ropes initiatives. I thought about what was happening: 'I'm hiring people to do these things and I don't know how to do it myself, nor do I know the philosophy.'"

Karen shared the realization of being unknowledgeable about experiential education which had surfaced during her early experience. "I'm just waiting for someone to figure out that I don't know this." She continues, "What the director of the NYLP knew was that I had the people skills. He didn't hire me to be an experiential educator, he hired me to work with people. I could put the staff together, build community, and create a sense of community at these conferences. It wasn't these technical hard skills that were important at the time, I didn't need to know how to do these things. But I thought I did."

In 1992, Karen worked as a chaplain in Minneapolis at a half-way house on forty acres of land. "I was there three days a week and got to use a lot of the initiatives out there," she reports, "and I wanted to do more and learn more." Her supervisor approached her one day and asked, "Have you ever heard of 'The Bush'? That's the Bush Fellowship, you should go for it." Karen decided to apply for the Bush Fellowship Leadership Program in 1993 and won. A prestigious Minnesota state fellowship award for excellence in community leadership, Karen was the only African

American to win the award during that year. Accepting the offer presented by her supervisor to return to school, she explained her interest to him, "I want to get a degree in experiential education because I really want to understand what I'm doing, and get the foundation." Following her goals, she obtained a Master's degree at Mankato State.

Karen maintains that a lack of people of color is a major issue in experiential education. "There are not a lot of people of color to connect with," Karen asserts. "Because there are so few of us, our voice speaks for our people. You're cast into the role of having to teach those who don't know, and you're the token voice. Not only do you have to educate, but you have to tolerate people who are many times either subconsciously or willfully ignorant. There is an isolation factor [as a person of color] and a sense of wondering when these people [from the dominant culture] are going to get with it." Karen feels that many people around her may lack a certain awareness or have a lack of exposure to the perspectives of people of color. She also knows about the importance of educating others, but also informs individuals that she has her own personal perspective and does not represent all African American people. Karen contends, "I have to actually say it: 'This is my perspective, it's not everyone's, we are not a model cultural people. I speak for myself, but I know that because you have no other contact, I end up representing all people of color . . .' and so I have to challenge people. Attempting to inform people about their own narrowness of perspective is a challenge for me. If you're going to be an ally, you can't depend on just my voice. You must ask questions."

For Karen, her main source of support is from circles of women friends. Specifically, a circle of sisters of color provides an opportunity to network and overcome certain barriers and frustrations. "We need a separate space," proclaims Karen. "It's about the dynamics of racism and oppression and how it has place in the common society that we all participate in. I think that white people don't always understand that, so they get suspicious whenever we pull away."

Using the International AEE Conference environment as an example, Karen says, "We hear white people say, 'Why do they have to be together, we want them with us. . . .' We [people of color] must be together," she explains, "because that's where we draw our strengths. We try to tell white people, 'You don't understand how it is; we become bicultural people. We have to be bicultural because we have to operate both in your world and in our own. When you're operating in what is not your own, then you need moments when you need to be with somebody like yourself; otherwise, it drains and strains you. It's rejuvenation when you come together with people who are like you. That's why it is necessary; it's not a conspiracy, it's not about keeping secrets, it's even not about keeping you out, it's about getting something from within and replenishing ourselves from ourselves.'"

Karen described a cultural reality, in part, based on language. In the state of Minnesota, people of color only represent five percent of the population. "I have never lost that sense of always being on the margins," explains Karen. "And I know that

influences what I do and how I do it. I could walk into a room and the first thing I notice is who's there. Who's there that looks like me, who's not there, and what kind of situation am I walking into. I'm not even conscious about it, but it's always present. And I know that it influences how I talk. After having been in college for ten years [Bachelor's degree and two Master's], I would go back home and get accused of talking white. People would say to me, 'You talk white. Would you stop doing that.' And so when I'd go into the lingo and slang of my sisters and brothers, my mother would say, 'Would you stop talking like that and talk like you're educated!' So I feel like I can't win."

When asked what empowers women of color and how could she relate this strength and courage to her involvement in experiential education, Karen replied, "Connecting. Affirmation. Having the opportunity to do. Along with the opportunity is being shown how to do something, and then being given the opportunity to do it. Being able to go even a little bit further, and receiving affirmation is empowering. Finding when you get there that what you've done is a validation. Connecting with other women and learning that they've gone through the same kind of struggle, saying 'Yeah,' and recognizing that. Looking back and leaning on our sisters who are back there and knowing that they are trying to push us forward."

Karen states that the audience and the topic determine whether her voice is welcome or not welcome. "Most of the time I think it's welcomed," she says. "At least at Mankato as a student, I bring a piece of [ethnic] diversity that's not there. I'm the only person of color in the whole program in the last two years at Mankato State. My guess is not many people of color have actually gone through the program. So, I bring something different, which is a little bit different for me."

She reports that both the students and professors welcome her voice, yet their occasional use of inappropriate language and cultural stereotyping is more apparent in her presence. "I know that I cause them to change what they say," replies Karen. "I've seen professors use examples [in class], and look directly at me, then they would include an African American example. Just looking at me and seeing this little African American face makes them remember and say, 'Oh, I need to include someone else.' So they do, and that's fine with me because they need to do this better."

Karen tells of another example in a class discussion about an inner-city school. "One of the things the professor said was very derogatory about urban schools. I hit him on it and he immediately apologized, saying he did not mean to perpetuate that kind of an image," Karen says in his defense. "Sometimes this causes people to have to slow down and deal with issues they don't want to deal with because I bring it up. Sometimes I wonder, 'Am I going to always have to be the one to bear the burden of always bringing it up?!' I get tired of that role. I wish someone else would be aware and bring stuff up."

Karen states, "There are few women of color [in experiential education] as role models; therefore, it is difficult connecting with others for advice or for mentoring.

There are not a lot of women in this field in general for this." Despite this barrier, Karen has selected a male mentor from Mankato State and has drawn several strengths from him. "He's dynamic and he's someone who is good in this field. He had something that I wanted to learn. He has a solid philosophy which he operates well from; he's a great facilitator and his bag of tricks is bottomless. I approached this person and asked him to be my mentor because he is in the field of experiential education." He agreed and made opportunities available to her. Karen recounts, "He encouraged me to do, and to go further than I thought I could. For instance, I had the opportunity to be a keynote speaker at the AEE Rocky Mountain Regional Conference. He made the opportunity available to me, and I would not have taken it otherwise. He said, 'Go ahead, do it,' although I didn't think that I was ready."

There was some frustration associated with this offer. "I didn't think I had legitimacy to speak at this event, because I haven't been in this field long enough," Karen explains. "Had I not been a person of color, I know that I would not have been asked to speak as the keynote. I don't have the credentials to be up there yet. But because I'm a person of color, I got this opportunity. So it's frustrating in the sense of asking myself, 'Did I really earn this? Do I deserve to be up there?' On the other hand, it's a good opportunity because it gives me a chance to grow. I do have something to say, so this gives me a voice and a chance to say it. When I got there, I was the only person of color. And that's real frustrating. I go to a large regional conference and I'm the only identifiable person of color there."

Expressing herself with pride, Karen views experiential education as an excellent opportunity and encourages young women of color to get into this field. For young women, particularly young women of color, interested in coming into experiential education, Karen encourages them with determination and vigor. "Although there aren't a lot of women doing this, I would tell them to come anyway," says Karen, "because a lot of the work that we do is work that transforms. It has a power. If anything is going to save our kids, it's going to be us," insists Karen. "This is a way of doing education that can transform them. Education that works, education that does not devalue. I would say to them [young women of color] that if you want to make a difference, this is a way to make a difference. This is a way to learn not just the hard skills, which I see a lot of the young white women doing, but to learn the soft skills and to have the ability to process."

Karen desires to integrate experiential education into what she does for a living because she views it as a way of educating that works. "It values people," she says. "So much of traditional education does not value the learner. And that means that my people, people of color, African American kids are not being valued in the classrooms. The philosophical basis of experiential education values the learner, it's student centered. And so, right from that point it says you are important, you have something to contribute and a space is created to do that."

Karen values facilitation, and believes the reason it is so transformative is because it can be applied to the rest of life. "But you need somebody to ask the right

questions," she says. "I would say focus on the soft skills, because we [African Americans] are such a broken people and we need healing. Old people need it, middle-aged people need it, and young people need it because our communities are broken and we need healing. I would say focus on gaining those kinds of skills so that you can be a part of that healing and give back to the community. And you can help facilitate your own healing, because it can do that for you, too. Not only does it transform the participant, it transforms that practitioners as well."

Karen turned 40 in 1994 and, throughout her life, has been engaged in a variety of leadership roles. Her views about diversity in leadership provide more words of wisdom to young people of color: "I think it's important that our people see our people in positions of leadership. This is a much more powerful statement. Young people need to see us doing the programs, not always white people leading the expeditions, and white people doing whatever it is in the position up front. They need to see us up front. So I would encourage them to become the people who are the 'up front' ones."

Her words kept flowing. "It's good to work directly one on one with the kids," she advises, "but don't shy away from moving up and becoming the trainer of trainers. And don't shy away from becoming part of the higher management because that's where the power decisions are made. When you reach the point where you are capable, that's where you have to go. Use what you know and who you know because sometimes that's more important in this world. The fact that I know Craig, my mentor, opens doors. Ethically sometimes I don't like that, but if it's going to get me a voice, and will get me into a position of power and I can use that to help people, then I'm going to go ahead and do it because that's what everyone else uses and, although I don't agree, that's how the game gets played."

Hepsi Barnett

Hepsi Barnett, born and raised in Oklahoma, is a Native American (Osage Indian) currently living in Toronto, Ontario. Her outdoor career began after attending a Colorado Outward Bound School course in 1977. Since then, she's worked at Outward Bound Centers and Schools in New Hampshire, Maine, Florida, Canada, North Carolina, and Colorado. She has also served on the Board of Directors of AEE. Hepsi is currently the Program Director at the Canadian Outward Bound Wilderness School.

Following high school graduation, participating in an outdoor course in the Canyonlands of Utah was a stepping stone to Hepsi's career as an experiential educator. Although she first attended college at Texas Women's University, her wilderness skills were cultivated at Prescott College in Arizona.

She described her experience in the Canyonlands as "life transforming." She was initially frustrated and did not comprehend the meaning of the program. Not knowing anything about experiential education or Outward Bound, Hepsi described her

ambivalence: "I thought it was the most ridiculous thing I had ever done and hated it. At one point during the course, I ended up quietly leaving and not telling anybody. I hiked out and got a ride with some hunters. As I was going back to get my stuff, it occurred to me that I was out of there. It also occurred to me that I was quitting. That was really hard so I asked the guys to let me out and I started walking back. I sat by the side of the road for a while and thought about what it would take to finish and why I would want to do that. I ended up walking back and finishing the course."

Her decision to return and finish the course was a turning point in her life. "I needed to do it because I wanted to, there was absolutely no pressure except pressure from myself. And I loved being on the land, being in the canyonlands was great; it's an incredibly spiritual place," describes Hepsi. "I didn't know anybody and was given very little information, yet when I finished, it was this great feeling of accomplishment. But at that time, I never thought this is what I want to do as a profession. It was more like, 'I never want to do this again in my life!' But I did it and never thought I'd do it again."

Hepsi shared that finishing the course was only one of several turning points in her life. Some personally devastating events which occurred while at Texas Women's University prompted Hepsi not to return. "I did not want to go back to TWU so I started doing a lot of introspection," explained Hepsi. "I was searching for something new and having drawn on my paradoxical experience at Outward Bound, I made some decisions and went to Prescott College. I did not go to become an educator necessarily, but to have more freedom and more opportunity to learn about what I wanted to do. And to think less of people telling me what I needed to do."

While at Prescott, Hepsi was approached to assist with an Outward Bound program which had started on a Navajo Reservation. "They had all this funding but they couldn't get the students. And when they did get the students, it was a bit of a disaster." Hepsi was later invited to join the staff. She explained her excitement was due to the fact she would be working with a Native group. "I started working on the Navajo Reservation. Eventually the program died out, but my interest was sparked enough that I wanted to continue in the field."

Hepsi admitted to having a "love/hate" relationship with Outward Bound (OB). "Part of it is the power of the results I have seen from doing the work and how [the programs] can influence people in positive ways. And I think about how it did that for me," she said. She believes Outward Bound is very influential but at the same time has lacked some understanding about cultural adaptation. She described their philosophy, metaphorically, as a mold. "You fit this model versus here is the best model to be in." In other words, the structure of OB has forced individuals to conform to the system rather than opening other avenues. "It seems that with this group [OB], you either fit in or you have nothing to say about it." Hepsi's observation is that Outward Bound is often targeted with negative viewpoints because it is a big

organization, but states they are no different from any other. "The most amazing things happen on the courses, yet there are also injustices," she contends.

Her early experiences with Outward Bound were constraining due to a lack of individuality conveyed by the OB system. "I'm really aware of who I am, and how I identify is ever-present," maintained Hepsi. "I identify now and am very open about being a two-spirited Native. When I first came to Outward Bound I was very much acculturated into the [organizational] group. One Outward Bound instructor was the same as another Outward Bound instructor. There was absolutely no mention of who you were, how you identified, or what you could possibly bring or offer that other people could not."

People of color in the field are also beset with "tokenism." Hepsi proclaimed that this is a constant barrier. "It [tokenism] happens every day in experiential education, it happens every day in the corporate world, too. I believe that if there's an experiential education organization which can get away with tokenism, then that would continue. That is, individuals depending on one (or two) people of color in a particular organization to represent, or be the voice of, that particular culture." She also believes that organizations can't get away with it anymore because of an increased awareness of ethnic differences as well as people of color speaking out against "tokenism." She continued by relating this to the importance of change. "Now it's more about challenging the system and the way the system runs."

When available, people of color may be singled out to work with minority groups. There is much validity to this, yet on the contrary, the question may arise as to actual motivation. Similarly, when working jointly with other people of color there are certain mysterious attitudes. "It's hard because I personally get a lot out of working with people of color, as peers as well as on courses," relates Hepsi. "At the same time, I get angry when they think that it's all up to me, that I'm the only one that can do this. Or I hear statements such as 'We are the only ones. . . .' Not only do we have to educate ourselves to be the perfect person and completely understand racism and internalized racism, and work through that on our own, but we have to educate all the people around us in the organization *and* the young people that we're working with." Hepsi expressed that it is a lot to do. "It's hard enough for me to speak for who I am, much less to think that I might be representing Native people. Native people are so different anyway; there are a variety of tribes and we're all different. I go back and forth between being very tired, and very angry, to being very much a learner and really appreciating the opportunities that I've had."

Being a woman of color in the field not only means encountering issues of gender, but learning about the racial-ethnic backgrounds of other people of color. Hepsi has been involved with the Natives, Africans, Asians, Latinos(as) and Allies (NAALA) groups with both Outward Bound and the Association for Experiential Education. "Whether it's with women in NAALA or even in the Native community, I find that we're so divisive and somewhat judgmental of each other," says Hepsi. This barrier is counterproductive to creating unity. "We don't know enough about

one another. That's what marginalized groups do to each other, right? Nobody oppresses like the oppressed!" [As people of color] we don't know whether to reach out and embrace each other or be leery of one another. I think you can find that in any group. It hurts us because then you have the dominant group sitting back with their arms crossed, saying, 'Well, we told you so; we gave these people a chance and look at them now.'"

Hepsi recalled a large gathering in 1990 where each Outward Bound School sent nearly every person of color on their staff to Thompson's Island to attend a very important meeting about issues of diversity and funding. Based on a proposal from the office, funding had been allocated to improve diversity within the organization. "Everyone was fighting for this money!" exclaimed Hepsi. "That's really what it was about. For the first time in my life, I saw more people of color than I had ever seen in one place all doing amazing work. We all got together and agreed, 'This is amazing, we had no idea there was this many people of color working for Outward Bound, and we should have lunch together!' Well, it was very threatening to the dominant group. In fact, one of the white professionals said, 'Why can't we have lunch with you?' Many controversial dynamics were happening. As we [NAALA] had lunch together, we talked about such things as 'How can Outward Bound talk about diversity? We should talk about diversity. Because we don't even know what we think yet, we need to wrestle with this and struggle with it and compare our experiences.'" Hepsi explained that safety is a common thread throughout all Outward Bound Schools. When the group came back together with the OB administrators, NAALAs confronted the management by stating that the profile for *diversity* should be equivalent to that of *safety,* and taken just as seriously. Although there are still many unresolved areas, significant outcomes of this gathering include development of the NAALA Steering Committee and establishment of the new position of a National Diversity Director to oversee the newly created NAALA Institute. Many action items regarding issues of diversity are still being addressed; as accountability improves, progress and change will follow.

So what empowers this Native woman? From an early age, Hepsi grew up being proud of who she is. "I grew up being in touch with the traditional Indian culture, being proud of who I am and more or less being related to the land. There were always lots of other Indians where I grew up, and being around lots of relatives created a strong sense of me. I think about how all that relates to everything around me."

Today, Hepsi feels there is a certain expectation or romanticizing, particularly in experiential education, about what it means to be Native American. "I think people are completely disappointed when they meet me," says Hepsi, "because I'm not on a horse, I don't have this long braid. I'm a half-breed, light skinned and people wonder what's it all about. When I think back to when I was younger, that insecurity wasn't there because of where I grew up, which was with my family."

Hepsi describes the women in her family as having courage and fortitude. "Native women are incredibly strong. There were many role models. I think about my grandmother, my mother, and my aunts and they are what has helped feed the culture. They are the teachers; I learned from their strengths. My mother is the one who keeps going; she's the one that's always there and I know she'll take care of whatever situation comes up."

Although her family does not completely understand what Hepsi's work entails, strength and support received has helped her persevere. "I do know that I've always gotten a lot of support from my family, especially from my mother in terms of being strong and standing up for what I believe in, for believing in who I am, and not being afraid to speak out. To them they could never think about paying money to be out on the land. They do know that I work with young people and they completely respect that."

Hepsi has clearly had a variety of experiences and support networks. During her days at Prescott College, she was in a predicament where racial injustice landed her in jail. "One time when I had to deal with paper work to get my dentistry and health care paid for," recalls Hepsi, "I had to go to Phoenix." Because there was a very long wait at the dentist office, she decided to go out for lunch with some other Indian people who were also in the waiting room. "As we were coming back across the alley from lunch, back to the dentist office, we were harassed by these policemen. We were actually provoked based on the fact that we were Indian. I was officially arrested for vagrancy because I didn't have an I.D. and my car was fifty yards away; they wouldn't let me go to my car and so they arrested me and three other Native men."

There was absolutely no reason that should have happened, she insisted. To add salt to her wounds, Hepsi was getting ready to attend a winter mountaineering course which was starting the next day. Luck of the draw and financial assistance from Prescott College sent her on her way. For Hepsi, this was a realization. "Okay, obviously I am different," she states, "and I learned you have to stand up for who you are and for injustices. That was just a small example of things that happen every day to people of color."

Hepsi seeks some of her support from other women and draws much of her strength from other women of color. Francis Rucker, for instance, is an African American woman who came to work for Outward Bound many years ago. "Francis and I ended up working very closely together when she was first hired and, over the years, we've developed a friendship as well as being great resources and strength to each other."

Hepsi's voice has come a long way. "With everything that's happened and every attempt to eradicate Native people, we're still here," she says. "And, there's a huge Native population in Canada with some real political clout," explains Hepsi. When the first Native program came together about ten years ago, she was the only Native instructor. When a decision had to be made whether to blend Native students with

non-Natives or keep them together in a group, Hepsi was out-voted and there were one or two Native students with each brigade. "My voice has come a long way since that time," she continues, "and now we're running this Native program that is culturally appropriate. For instance, there are elders who usually start the courses with a prayer, there are sweat lodges, they learn smudges, and teachings are from the instructors as well as the elders from the community. And, there are all-Native brigades with at least one Native instructor on the course."

Hepsi described the background of some of the Native youth who participate in the program. Since the 1960s, many of the young people in Canada have been taken from their families and put up for adoption simply because they're Indian. "These Native kids come through the program and for the first time, they have the opportunity to be proud of who they are and learn about who they are as a Native person in the presence of other Native people," Hepsi reports. "There's this amazing road of exploration that happens out on those courses that I have never seen; it's a rather powerful life-transforming experience."

If any of the young women in her program wanted to pursue experiential education as a viable career, Hepsi would provide as much support and guidance as she possibly could. "I would try to figure out a way for them to work with Outward Bound, or try to hook them up with nearby programs in their communities," shares Hepsi. She also places value in active outreach. "Generally speaking, it has not been my experience that people of color (especially women of color) are lined up at the doors. But they are out there. So when people say, 'I want Native people or I want people of color, our doors are open'—well, you've got to go out there and find them if you really want them, you have to put some energy into it. They are there, you know, we are here," Hepsi states with certainty. "All over, there are organizations who think like that; whether you go to the reservations or inner cities, people of color are around if you really want them."

Hepsi's varied background and venturesome outlook on life has provided her with many unique experiences. She's honest and forthright; her dynamic personality has been a contributing factor to her success. Many of her efforts emphasize community-building, and this is evident in her genuine nature.

Gini Hornbecker

Gini Hornbecker has been an experiential educator for the past 15 years. She has built and managed ropes courses in Portland and Sisters, Oregon, and has worked as a consultant in cultural diversity and organizational change. Over the years, she has worked with a broad spectrum of groups including youth at-risk, women in leadership, and corporate executives.

Gini describes her introduction to experiential education as "somewhat unorthodox." She declares, "I did not consciously choose a path of experiential education. I kind of fell upon it!" She was a junior at the University of Maryland, majoring in

psychology, when she left school to devote full-time energy to organizing anti-Vietnam War activities. "We were at the nation's Capitol every other week; there was always so much to do." Gini considers being involved, in this case on the political front lines, essential to experiential learning.

Shortly thereafter, she married a man whom she met in Washington, DC, and in 1972 they moved to Oregon with a newborn son. Frustrated with the lack of quality child care in Portland, Oregon, they "recycled" an abandoned school and opened St. Philip Neri Child Development Center, which Gini managed. Guided in this endeavor by Dr. Mary York, from Portland State University, Gini learned that "if you engage at the heart level, the head will follow." As part of the program, Gini put together classes, field trips, and hands-on learning experiences for children ages two to five. "At the time, I didn't know any experiential theory. I was just operating from the seat of my pants! I was recognizing what was turning kids on, getting them involved, and from there, I could assist them in learning how to be with each other and express themselves."

When Gini first arrived in Portland, she was impressed with the sight of Mt. Hood. "I really wanted to climb it," she says. At the same time, she saw a newspaper article describing the popular south-side climb to the summit. Her interest in summiting Mt. Hood grew with the size of her family. Her husband's fear for Gini's safety, as well as the birth of her daughter, would delay her attempt for another two years. During those years, Gini "developed a dependency on marijuana and began to feel stuck in the traditional wife/mother role." A serious kidney infection in 1976 forced her to recognize that her life needed to change. She took a climbing class, developed her physical conditioning, and finally climbed Mt. Hood. "I absolutely loved everything [climbing] did for me. With climbing, something opened up in me. I felt a renewed passion for my life."

Many of Gini's role models in her life, including in outdoor endeavors, were women. In the early 1970s, she met Helen Cheek while volunteering for the St. Vincent de Paul Association in Portland, and together they had an interesting adventure. Gini recalls, "Helen was a serious backpacker and twenty-five years older than me. She had hiked all over the Northwest and asked me to circumnavigate Mt. Hood with her and a friend. I had never backpacked before except on Mt. Hood. My raingear was a poncho that snapped up the side and a garbage bag."

Gini's story is a classic. "There was a light drizzle when Helen, another friend, Blackie, and I started out from Timberline Lodge at 6,000 feet. We got four or five miles out when Blackie slipped and injured her knee. By this time it was raining heavily. We ran into a ranger who invited us to a Forest Service lodge for the night. As Blackie's knee was quite swollen from the fall, she decided to hike out with the ranger the next morning. Optimistically searching for blue sky, Helen and I decided to continue our trip." As they hiked along, the weather deteriorated rapidly with high winds and rain turning to blinding snow. "Needless to say, it was very cold. By about four o'clock, Helen was hypothermic." Fortunately, Gini had recently been to

a lecture by Dr. Cameron Bangs on hypothermia and recognized the symptoms. Gini recalls, "I didn't know where we were, but we managed to find one of the stone shelters on the side of the mountain. I started my first outdoor fire in the corner of the shelter, fired up some hot drinks, stripped Helen down, and climbed into a sleeping bag with her. I did all the basics that I learned in the hypothermia lecture." Gini continued, "Initially, I laid out our rain fly for a ground cloth with our sleeping bags on top of it. The shelter's tin roof was full of holes and leaked like crazy. I realized this is really dumb! I could imagine this article in *Accidents in North American Mountaineering* about two women who froze to death of hypothermia laying on top of the rain fly that might have kept them dry! With the storm raging outside, I put our tent up inside the shelter. The next morning, we awoke to find a foot of new snow completely covering the trail. Fortunately, Helen had recovered that night and in the morning, we figured out which way to go. We had a great trip!" A year later, Helen invited Gini to speak about "accident prevention" at a local trail club meeting.

Gini continued to explore outdoor challenges while balancing motherhood and family responsibilities, with her personal growth and skill development. An interest in ice climbing led her to answer an advertisement for a cook/base-camp manager at Lute Jerstad Adventures ice-climbing seminars held on Mt. Hood's Elliott Glacier during the summer. "I'd done some ice climbing and thought this would be a great opportunity to learn more." She spent the first week hauling loads of equipment and food up to the glacier base camp. It was at this job that she met Catherine Freer, a well-known international climber and instructor who became a significant role model for her.

"Catherine was somebody who had a very 'can-do' attitude." Gini remembers, "There was a craggy outcropping just above our base camp and one evening after dinner [Catherine] said, 'Let's go up and do some bouldering.' She danced up a thirty-five-foot crack, maybe a 5.5 or 5.6. I had never done any solo climbing before that time, but her gentle suggestions and clear confidence in my abilities helped me to find my own confidence and skill." From Catherine, Gini learned about two kinds of fear. "She told me to recognize the kind of fear that stops you dead in your tracks and the fear that sharpens all of your senses—it moves you into total awareness of everything that surrounds you." Gini believes there is a difference in the choices. "In the first choice, one would get nowhere, and in the other, you could see what avenues open up to you." Gini continues to use this notion today in many different situations beyond climbing. "To me, it has a lot of deep metaphoric value."

On Catherine, Gini states, "She made it clear that I could do anything I wanted to. I really wanted to be on the glacier and it didn't make sense that I was doing all the cooking. So I reorganized things to be more equitable between the instructors and by the end of the summer, I, too, was teaching ice climbing."

To create more opportunities for adventure, Gini joined the Mazamas, a Portland-based climbing club. "I was climbing whenever and wherever I could, but mostly with men." Her leadership and climbing skills quickly moved her into a

teaching position with the club. She taught climbing "experientially with a lot of support for personal reflection and personal growth."

This was also a time of great personal growth for Gini. Her family was very supportive, often camping out at the trailhead or base camp while she climbed. "My partner wanted to 'do the right thing,' but he was struggling with me coming into my own identity. We had been following a very traditional path doing what [society] expected of us. It became clear that neither of us was happy in these roles."

Climbing became a metaphor for many changes in Gini's life. In 1980, she accepted a position with North Portland Youth Service Center to develop a ropes course challenge program. "I wasn't even sure what a ropes course was, but I thought it might be an opportunity to create a mini-experience in a city park that would duplicate the personal growth I had experienced through climbing." Using guidelines from the book, *Cowstails and Cobras*, Gini, Richard Earnst, and a handful of her climbing friends built both a low and a high challenge course in Pier Park in Portland. Her focus working with the ropes course was to help people "take a look at where they were and reflect on what they wanted as an individual and in group relationships." Proudly, Gini states, "The ropes program at North Portland served over 41,000 people, including adjudicated youth, and adults, during the ten years I was director."

Gini's first experience with the Association for Experiential Education (AEE) took place at the international conference at Humboldt State University, Arcata, California. "I remember meeting Project Adventure folks and hundreds of others doing the same things I was doing." She was amazed to discover people, programs, and a wealth of literature articulating experiential theory and practice. Through her involvement in AEE she came to know women from the Women's Professional Group. "They have been a real salvation for me, over the years. [These women] have always created a tremendous place to feel grounded and supported. For me, this has become a very safe place to be."

Mary McClintock, former AEE Women's Professional Group Chair, and Linda Besant, founder of SOAR, have also been role models for Gini. "Mary is steadfast and completely comfortable being who she is. Mary educated many people at the 1992 AEE International Conference about gay and lesbian history through a timeline she posted on the wall in one of the building corridors." Pertaining to Linda, Gini states, "She founded her own outdoor program for persons with physical and/or mental disabilities. I ran a challenge course and a rock-climbing program for SOAR's participants." To prepare for her work with SOAR, Gini spent time climbing blindfolded and with different limbs immobilized to assist her in developing an understanding of what might be different about the experience for someone who did not have the ability to see or move freely.

Many of the participants in SOAR had disabilities resulting from head injuries. Ironically, in 1988, Gini was in a car accident and experienced a massive head trauma that changed her life. "Essentially, I was killed and resuscitated," according

to Gini. Recovery required her to re-learn how to walk, how to talk, and how to organize her thoughts to complete tasks. "I had a condition whereby, in my head, I could see myself or imagine myself saying or doing something and would swear I had done it, only to discover that I had not completed [the task]. I had to make checklists and do tasks in front of the mirror or on a tape recorder." Through this experience, she discovered new ways to train, and "re-direct energy," in her mind. "The accident forced me to look at my life and how I was taking care of myself. I recognized that many of us are disabled in some way, resulting from things that happen to us or what we say and do to ourselves."

Gini would like to see more women in the field of experiential education. "At the risk of sounding sexist, I think women offer another level of balance and openness to situations they are in. Women bring a perspective that is more nurturing, supportive, and accepting."

Some of the barriers that Gini has encountered as a woman in experiential education include not being taken seriously, lack of a formal education, and gender stereotyping. For example, to teach an experiential course at a local college, Gini had to pair up with a male who had a Master's degree. "He was the instructor on record and was paid more. When he no longer wanted to teach the class, the college canceled the course because they would not hire me alone." There were many times she was not taken seriously as a woman in outdoor settings. "Male climbers or rescue students would see me as their instructor and would not really listen until I had led the routes and demonstrated that I could out-climb them."

As a co-founder of the Inclusivity Consulting Group, she often encountered clients who would address their questions to and make eye contact with her male partner first. At one particularly important interview for a contract, she and her partner deliberately took seats next to each other so when clients looked across to us they would be more likely to see both and not just one or the other. "I found I needed to force myself to interrupt conversations and not wait so long for an opportunity to speak. It didn't feel like me, but it seemed to be the norm."

To other women in experiential education, Gini shares that "there is a real strength in looking back over our shoulders, honoring our individual paths, and recognizing the skill and strength it's taken to get here. I'm most successful as an educator when I'm authentic, going by what my head and heart find to be true."

She concludes, "Growing up I received a lot of conditioning around not trusting people and competing with women. Lacking trust creates distance and makes it hard to recognize and accept the support that is available. There are many wonderful people doing wonderful things that go unnoticed. As women, we must be willing to make connections, recognize and value our many perspectives. Using each other's support can make a big difference."

Yuri Kimura

Yuri Kimura is a 22-year-old Japanese woman. She was born in Japan and when she was six, moved to the United States. Yuri is a graduate of Earlham College with a Bachelor's Degree in Human Development and Social Relations.

A young professional to the field, Yuri is exploring her options and career possibilities in experiential education. Earlham College in Indiana was a supportive environment for her while she was a student. She was mentored by some terrific people and gained many valuable skills, including strong leadership skills. Although she has instructed wilderness and basic rock-climbing courses for a variety of programs, working as a leader with Connecting with Courage (an outdoor program for girls in the Boston area) has been the highlight of her experiences thus far.

Yuri explained that Connecting with Courage deals with girls' development and psychological theories. Yuri shared that she struggled with completely understanding if and how American, feminist, and psychological theories would affect someone from a different cultural background. "At these programs [Connecting with Courage], we say, 'Speak from the heart, use your voice, be assertive,' but if a different culture [like the Japanese culture] doesn't allow for that, then this is difficult."

Photo courtesy of Amy Kohut

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Yuri described her enjoyment in working with the girls and one other staff person of color while at Connecting with Courage. "The girls' program has a philosophy that allows me to bring up and discuss my culture. There was a half-day during the summer set aside for a culture workshop; having the girls delve into their backgrounds was excellent." This allowed them to open up and be themselves.

Regarding outdoor programs, Yuri believes her experiences have been different from her white allies. "It is clearly different because I've always been in the minority," she reports. "I come from a culture that respects relationships, but women's voices aren't necessarily heard as much as men's. Although I live in America, I still have cultural differences from growing up that are still part of me and it took me a long time to realize it was okay to be assertive." Yuri is very much in touch with her Japanese roots. "The whole Japanese culture is relationship based," she continued, "although you may feel one way, you may express something else just to make sure you're not hurting the basic relationship. Whereas in the [outdoor] field, you have to be totally and completely honest because you're living with other people for an extended period of time. You have to learn to say things with integrity." She explains that Asian women are socialized to be more passive and submissive and not to speak out. "I think people who have come on the [Connecting with Courage] program with cultural stereotypes of who I am are surprised when I become the outgoing, fun instructor who leads trips," Yuri exclaimed.

Yuri has received concrete feedback from others pertaining to her leadership style and skills. An example of this feedback is, "You know you're solid with your skills and you know what you're talking about. You still tend to second-guess yourself and don't speak out when you know that you should." Yuri wonders how much of that comes from her cultural background. For instance, she states, "Maybe I should stay quiet even when I know something is wrong. Avoidance of conflict is very cultural. Don't confront someone with a disagreement, they should just pick up on the signals. This concept of being relationship based has a very strong influence on me."

Overcoming barriers hasn't come easy to Yuri, but she feels that she has been very empowered in the field. "I've done a lot of growing and self-reflecting," she stated. "I feel that I have a strong sense of who I am because of the experiences and encounters that I have had by being in experiential education. I love the teaching that I do and the trust and respect I get from my students." She also maintains that she struggles with the Japanese side of her questioning, "Am I supposed to be heard?" Yuri continued, "I definitely see myself as having a very Japanese side, for instance, quiet, obedient, polite, humble, avoid conflict, and a very American side also. I have struggled in the past figuring out where I am on that spectrum."

For Yuri, women in the field provide sources of support. But she is still frustrated with the issue of racial and ethnic diversity. "It's hard sometimes not having sisters of color around you," Yuri states. "Oftentimes, I'd talk with my women-of-color friends from school where I had a network. Although they're not in the same field,

and may not know anything about the outdoors, they understand issues I deal with as a woman of color."

As a Japanese woman, Yuri believes that a crucial part of exploring her ethnicity, uniqueness, appearance, and traditions in the outdoors is finding a self-identity. "What better way than a three-day solo!" she exclaimed. "I did this during my first year in college and wrote forty pages in my journal. I spent a lot of time thinking about me, not about anyone else in my group." She also explained that time in the wilderness provided her with a great deal of personal growth during periods of instruction. "Because you are always on the course yourself, even if you are instructing it," she proclaims.

Yuri believes there are times when she has felt "out of place" in experiential education settings. She said it was difficult to pinpoint specifics but shared one experience: "I remember talking with one of my male colleagues, a Hispanic guy, and we were discussing how we were the only two people of color that were instructors in the field in this particular area [of the program]. Although at one point we were having an argument, we had to be allies. This woman sitting next to me (a friend of mine also on the staff) said, 'I don't really see you as a person of color anyway.' What I felt her saying is that I act white and that she doesn't see me as any different. Maybe I'm assuming that's what she was saying. Basically what she was implying is that I've acculturated myself based on how I say or do things. She was trying to be nice by saying my color doesn't matter. But it does to me. And to disregard that in any way is to disrespect me. This is something I constantly struggle with. Because over ninety-five percent of the people I either worked with or for or have taught in my last four years as an instructor have been white, I feel that I am often the 'invisible minority.' Because I 'talk white, act white, dress white,' I can pretty much conform to the people around me and am often widely accepted as part of that group." Yuri contends that as a result, she is often "caught as the spokesperson for the minority group or the token person of color" and that becomes difficult for her.

One day during a pulling-boat trip, Yuri taught the girls how to count to fifty and sing songs in Japanese while rowing. "This is one way to share my culture, and I had never done that before. It was quite an experience and made me feel like I gave this part of me, this little piece of my culture, to the girls." Yuri has become very aware about how she approaches cultural issues in experiential education. "A facilitator of a culture-and-courage workshop we once had said that I was 'closeted' about my culture on my first course. That really struck me, so I came out as a Japanese woman on the first day of the next two courses."

As a woman of color, Yuri makes every effort to be heard and believes that fundamentally, her voice has been welcome in the field of experiential education. "While working with the girls at Connecting with Courage, I consciously tried to talk about culture or differences and similarities between people," stated Yuri. "Simply because of what I look like, questions are always there for other people. For instance, the girls ask, 'Where are you from?' or 'Do you eat with chopsticks?' Other

questions can be inquisitive in another way, such as, 'What do you mean you're Japanese? Can you teach me how to say this or say that?' And so, we've had a lot of good interactions about language and culture." Additionally, Yuri explains how conscious the staff were in placing Asian girls who join the program in her group. As these 12- and 13-year-old girls are at a crucial age of identity development, there is greater value in providing role models with similar backgrounds for them.

Yuri declared that, for the most part, she believes she has been fortunate that her voice has been welcomed. "I think that this may have to do primarily with the fact that I was working with women and girls at Connecting with Courage and before that at Earlham College," says Yuri. "For me, it's sometimes hard to distinguish what is not 'welcome.' Is it because I am a woman? or of color? I know that in some of the coed climbing classes I assisted for a lead male instructor, my voice was not always heard or respected, mostly by the men. This is why I decided to move on to all-women's climbing classes."

Role models for Yuri have been predominantly family members. "Support from my family has been excellent," insists Yuri. "My mom has been a role model in my life. Because of her experiences with the Girl Scouts, she supports me in what I do. She sees my work as good despite all the 'cultural weirdness' that might get brought up about a Japanese woman leading outdoor trips. My grandmother was an amazing role model," continues Yuri. "She knew I was spending time in the mountains and was doing the kinds of things my mom was doing when she was growing up. While some other relatives were skeptical of my work, my grandmother once said to me, 'That's the only place I can really see you—in the woods with a pair of jeans, a T-shirt, and a backpack.'"

Based on racial and ethnic difference, Yuri explained that she felt it is important for her to bring to the field of experiential education who she is and what her culture is. "To be able to be open and honest about my background and my values is important to me," Yuri asserts. "As a leader, I want to be able to share my culture with people in my group and for them to know I am sharing my culture with them."

Peggy Walker Stevens

Peggy Walker Stevens is currently a project director for the research and design firm, Education Development Center, based in Massachusetts. During the past six years, she has developed a network of 450 urban youth leaders in Lawrence, Massachusetts, who are involved in education, service, and adventure. She lives in Lexington, Massachusetts, with her family.

Peggy's introduction to education and the outdoors stemmed from her experience as an avid Girl Scout in both elementary and high school, and by being a Girl Scout leader in college. "I always liked the outdoor type of thing, and I always did a lot of teaching of younger kids. When I was eight years old, I ran a nursery school during the summer mornings in the neighborhood which you could send your kid

to for a dime for two hours. So I guess I was born a teacher! I later went to college and became a social studies and English teacher. I taught at an urban high school for three years, later became head of the English department, then taught in a more rural school for three years." This was in the early 1970s. She team-taught with the science teacher and developed an interdisciplinary experiential curriculum which she taught for two years while living in Colchester, Connecticut.

After graduation from the Harvard Graduate School of Education in 1976, she heard Bob Gillette speak at the National Council of Teachers of English Conference in New York City about doing outdoor classroom-based activities. This was one turning point at which Peggy became inspired to get involved in experiential education. "I went on to take a [Colorado] Outward Bound course for teachers in 1978, which also gave me some [teaching] ideas because we had three-and-one-half weeks of Outward Bound, plus a seminar on how to do it with your classes. At that point, it was the first time I had heard of the Association for Experiential Education (AEE), and met some Board members, which is really when I got interested. Because AEE was based in Colorado, Peggy became connected with the experiential educators' network and has worked to combine her love of the outdoors and doing service. "I think it's the idea of outdoors and service and that I was in [scout] troops as a youngster and teenager, that were very service oriented and all that had a big influence on me."

Peggy has always worked in public schools, not in the traditional sense, but in an experiential, interdisciplinary manner. "I'm an English teacher, I'm not an outdoor educator or adventure person." But in 1979, Peggy attended the international AEE conference in New Hampshire which changed her life and her experiential education involvement. At that time, she was teaching five "traditional" high school English classes which was frustrating to her. She remembers the conference because "the group of people were just so exciting." Partially due to frustrations in her teaching situation, she decided to get more involved in AEE. "Along came a ballot where you could nominate yourself or someone else for the board of directors. So I figured what the heck, and I nominated myself. There were approximately twenty-two people running for three spots on the board and there were only two women on the ballot." Peggy won a seat on the board and from that time forward, Peggy catapulted into experiential education and involvement with the Association. "I'd been a member for four months and had gone for one day to a national conference! Nobody who had anything to do with the board had ever heard of me."

This was a tremendous turning point in Peggy's view of herself as an educator. "It changed my idea of myself from a competent teacher who might become a principal, to someone who could operate on the national [education] scene." Through her new friends and colleagues on the AEE board, including Jim Kielsmeier, Bob MacArthur, and Rocky Kimball, Peggy learned a lot about experiential education, personal integrity, and operating an international professional association. "I felt very privileged to work with the people I did on the board. It was a tremendous

growth experience for me." About Kielsmeier and MacArthur, she states, "They have a really strong vision, and dreams, and that just stays with them. They are very inspiring to me." Peggy has enjoyed her involvement in AEE and what it has brought to her life. "Everyone shares this passion for learning in an involved way and for a life where you push a little bit to the edge of things."

Not many of her early AEE colleagues were involved in traditional public schools. "They have been much more involved in outdoor leadership or connected with organizations such as Outward Bound. I went for that three weeks [Colorado OB program] and that was it! Other than that, I've always worked in public schools." Through her involvement with AEE in the late 1970s to mid-1980s, Peggy gained ideas about experiential approaches to education. "I was the person who had [a traditional education] voice. I've always been a big spokesperson for the teachers in the organization because that's my orientation. However, I was exposed to some fantastic practitioners. At least by AEE people, public school is sometimes underrated as a setting for experiential educators."

Peggy continues about the utilization of experiential education in the public schools. "I think that public education is strongly moving in the direction of experiential education. I recently read that ninety percent of what we know about how people learn has been researched in the last ten years. Amazingly, all of [the research on education] is pointing to hands-on experience, people learning by doing." Peggy, however, sees AEE as somehow "missing the boat" in becoming leaders in the public schools movement toward experiential learning.

Regarding experiential education and women today, Peggy states that while there were women in the Association during her time on the board, there were few in leadership roles. "There was Mary Smith, but it was definitely a male-dominated organization. At one point I wrote an article in the *Journal* [*of Experiential Education*] encouraging women to do some of the [leading]. I found the women's group complaining about their lack of a role within the Association. It seemed to me that my story [of getting involved in the Association] was a true exception. Usually, the people getting elected to the board were people who were leading a special interest group or a professional group, or people attending or convening a regional or international conference and that women weren't taking on those roles except in the women's group. And they weren't getting elected to the board when they ran because they weren't taking more visible, lower levels of leadership in the organization. However, on the board, I always felt valued and encouraged. The men leading were very good facilitators . . . every voice was heard and you didn't feel male domination on the board. They encouraged me to become the first woman president of AEE."

Peggy sees education as a profession having a high number of women, but in her experience with AEE, this organization has lacked involvement with women. "All my friends in AEE are men, maybe because there were mostly men when I was on the board and I haven't been involved [with AEE] recently." She believes

experiential education has become more diverse because of the rise of therapists and mental health practitioners in the field which are not male-dominated professions. She notes that "you must have people involved on the basic level and they can begin to move forward as their talents and interests develop. If you don't have women or people of color involved at all levels, then you're going to have fewer at the top."

Regarding the arena of awards and recognition, Peggy notes that "there are not many older women in the organization, that is, in their late forties and fifties. Since that's when people tend to be at the height of their career when you would tend to get something like [an] award, it's not surprising that as long as the award is limited to members, you wouldn't have a lot of women nominees for it. Also, look around and you don't see many African Americans in their fifties in the Association." Optimistically, Peggy hopes "that twenty years from now, [awards] won't even be an issue."

As an educator and a leader in AEE, Peggy feels that she brings enthusiasm, organization, and vision. "I think I'm not afraid to say the truth sometimes, even when it's not the 'current line' in AEE." Although women's voices in AEE have had varying involvement and recognition, Peggy believes "you have to roll up your sleeves and show what you can do and say things such as 'I'll convene a conference, I'll show what I can do.'" Peggy notes that she leads with her "interpersonal intelligence." "As a teacher when I work with kids, I always know when one walks in if they're in a bad mood. I'm really tuned in to people."

As a high school teacher, her students would probably remember her because "they were always involved in learning by doing. It was very different than your typical high school class." When teaching government, her students had to work on a political campaign. Her students were "more involved than just sitting on their bottoms." Peggy's classes, and the activities she designed, engaged her student's minds. She was considered to be a really nice, yet really hard teacher. "That's the trick if you have a whole class of kids. How can you have each one stretch, but not so far that they get frustrated, and do that at the same time with twenty-five different people. It's a big challenge in teaching." She thinks that she can be more academic in her style than a lot of AEE people. Her academic curriculum is woven into experiential activities. "I think sometimes there is a problem in how you keep challenging intellectual integrity when the experiences aren't always done well." Currently, Peggy works more with teachers than with kids. However, she believes that the kids in her current program know that she really cares about them and that she will never give up on them.

Influencing Peggy in her early years were her parents. "I believe my parents were a big influence with the service idea; I think that the teacher part of me is just innate. We were raised to be very tolerant." Relating to tolerance, she continues by sharing this story: "One time, I went to a workshop on multicultural awareness and we all had to draw a picture and write what came to mind as your family's motto. I remember I was sitting next to a Mexican woman whose motto seemed to be about

beauty and I thought, 'Oh my gosh, BEAUTY!' [My motto] was much more Puritan, Like 'To whom much has been given, much is expected' and 'To make the world a better place.' That's the way were raised." However, she feels that sometimes "people with my Puritan background feel guilty. Guilt trips about my somewhat blessed life, I guess."

In the early 1980s, Peggy stopped teaching when her own children were very young. For the past ten years, she has enjoyed part-time work while still being able to spend time with her children. Prior to her current position, she was the editor of *The Journal of Experiential Education* for five years and was also an adjunct faculty working with beginning teachers. She has made time to be a Girl Scout leader for both her daughters' troops. She says, "I like to have time for doing all the leadership activities with my own kids as well as everybody else's." This ethic is one that has been very important to her. Peggy indicates her belief is that while other professionals, usually men, "have been working toward the height of their career in their 40s, women who choose to spend time as a mother, are somewhat behind professionally." While she is not regretting her choices, she thinks this is important to recognize in the professional scheme of things. Being a mom to her "is the ultimate teaching job."

Philosophically, advice Peggy offers to other women is "to hold your vision of what people can be and choose which battles are important to you." While Peggy started out in college with the goal of making a substantial change in American education, she exclaims, "Now I am happy if I can change just one school."

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the Northwest Regional Council of AEE for funding that supported work on this chapter.